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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000235

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AU](#) [UN](#) [SU](#) [CD](#) [LI](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: ELIASSON, SALIM: POLITICAL PROCESS TAKING OFF

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Classified By: CDA Cameron Hume, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) The UN Secretary General's Special Envoy Jan Eliasson and the Africa Union's Special Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim briefed ambassadors near the conclusion of their February 12-17 visit to Sudan. Despite the deteriorating humanitarian situation, they underscored the renewed willingness of the Sudanese government and the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatories to engage in a constructive political process and the importance of diffusing bilateral tensions between Chad and Sudan. They also called for a coordinated international effort to take advantage of this moment of opportunity. CDA Hume promised the full support of the USG for efforts to advance the political process, both on the ground in Darfur and in the UN Security Council. End summary.

Political Process Takes Off

¶2. (C) In a February 16 briefing for ambassadors near the conclusion of their visit to Sudan, UNSYG Special Envoy Eliasson and AU Special Envoy Salim noted the "credible beginning of a negotiating process" and called on the international community for assistance in continuing positive momentum on Darfur. "The process is starting to take-off," said Eliasson, adding that unification of the DPA non-signatories and a decrease in violence would prove that the nascent process is meaningful. "Nothing dramatic has occurred during our visit," explained Salim, "but we didn't expect that. Anyone who knows Darfur couldn't." The envoys announced the creation of a joint AU-UN task force in Khartoum and Darfur to advance political dialogue and acknowledged that the Darfur crisis was "a Sudanese problem" that required sustained engagement on the ground.

Non-Signatories

¶3. (C) Eliasson and Salim reported that Sudan had rejected the two extreme approaches to a negotiating process on the DPA: "take it or leave it" and "renegotiation." However, Sudanese officials, including Foreign Minister Lam Akol, Director of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Salah Ghosh, Presidential Advisors Nafie Ali Nafie and

Maghzoub Al Khalifa, and North Darfur governor Yousef Kibbir requested assistance in facilitating constructive discussions with the DPA non-signatories. Noting that he considered the DPA the basis of their mandate, Salim stated that he would not be "dogmatic" in his approach and recognized that additions would need to be made to the agreement.

¶4. (C) Both envoys met with representatives from the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and G-19 in North Darfur on February

¶15. Eliasson and Salim observed a "real desire" among the commanders to engage in productive dialogue and, despite their rhetoric opposing the DPA, continued to refer to provisions in the agreement as a basis for discussion. Salim lauded SLA commander Jar Al Naby's statement "that we all made mistakes" in Abuja as a sign of their willingness to move forward. Eliasson and Salim said that their message to the rebels had been "united you stand, divided you fall" and had encouraged them to prepare for negotiations by focusing on their priorities. While stating that they welcomed any initiative to bring non-signatories into a productive process (including the recent Eritrean efforts toward a conference in Libya), Eliasson and Salim called for international coordination so the parties would not be able to play off stakeholders against each other.

Chad and Regional Dynamics

¶15. (C) Recognizing that many of the strongest rebels were in Chad, the envoys expressed their concern that bilateral tensions between Sudan and Chad were impediments to a successful political process and indicated that elements on both sides of the border, both in and outside the two governments, still believed in an military solution to the conflict. "There will not be a durable solution to Darfur unless we resolve the crisis between Sudan and Chad," said

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Salim. "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your brothers." They called for international cooperation to bring about a lasting peace agreement between the two neighbors, but noted the difficulty in achieving such an agreement. "The borders of Africa don't respond to cultural and historical facts," said Eliasson, who later warned of a "growing military confrontation" between the two countries.

Humanitarian Operations Fragile

¶16. (C) Eliasson and Salim acknowledged the "relative control" that still existed in the distribution of food and medicine but warned that humanitarian operations were fragile.

Eliasson said that he saw "fatigue, frustration, and fear" in many of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Darfur and said that this could lead to a "breakdown" in operations.

CDA Hume echoed these concerns. The envoys said that they had discussed at length the humanitarian situation with Al-Khalifa at a three-hour meeting earlier in the week, when UNSYG Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs Manuel da Silva had detailed the deteriorating situation. The Sudanese government later released a statement re-affirming its commitment to protect civilians, noting its appreciation for international humanitarian operations -- particularly the work of NGOs -- and acknowledging the sacrifices of aid workers. Eliasson and Salim had also raised this critical issue in their meetings with the DPA non-signatories.

AU/UN Deployment

¶17. (C) In each meeting with Sudanese officials, Eliasson and Salim urged a prompt response to the UNSYG's January 24

letter regarding the UN heavy support package for the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Eliasson said that he was "under the impression that there was an agreement on phase two" after a meeting with President Bashir in Addis Ababa on the margins of the recent AU summit. The envoys pledged to raise the issue again during their second meeting with Al Khalifa and with President Bashir on February 17. Salim called on the international community to recognize that the AU and UN "moved slowly" and were operating under "high expectations" and "tough conditions," particularly in the area of security.

Comment

18. (C) Darfur is a tortured place, but an opportunity for constructive dialogue with the Sudanese government, surrounding countries, and the DPA non-signatories now exists. Approaching CDA Hume after the briefing, Eliasson expressed concern that the "drums" in the U.S. would drown out the possibility of advancing the political process at a critical moment and that it was important to "strike a balance" between confrontation and dialogue. He said that influential members of the regime want to solve the Darfur crisis in cooperation with the international community. We recommend operational support for the efforts of the joint UN/AU task force by encouraging them to use the pre-existing Darfur Peace Secretariats in Khartoum and El Fasher. In addition, the USG should put the Chadian and Libyan governments on notice that their links to Darfur rebel groups are destructive to peace. End comment.

19. (C) Tripoli minimize considered.
HUME